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Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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Letter of transmittal

[5 October 2016]

Mr. Secretary-General,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 2 of its resolution 70/12 of 24 November 2015.

The report covers the period from 7 October 2015 to 3 October 2016.

(*Signed*) Fodé **Seck**
Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

Chapter I
Introduction

1. The reporting period from 7 October 2015 to 3 October 2016 was characterized by the further deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. This included extrajudicial killings and excessive use of force by the Israeli occupying forces, raising serious concerns about the protection of civilians, including children; heightened provocations and tensions at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and other religious sites; ongoing illegal Israeli settlement activities and increasing house demolitions in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. These negative developments further stoked tensions and hopelessness. Notwithstanding recent initiatives for a stronger involvement of the wider international community, the impasse in the peace process continued.

2. The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip remained dire. Palestinian and international efforts to address humanitarian needs and rebuild the homes and livelihoods of the tens of thousands affected by the war in 2014 were insufficient to achieve significant results owing to the blockade and severe import restrictions imposed by Israel, as well as unfulfilled donor pledges. At least 65,000 Palestinian civilians remain displaced owing to the destruction of or severe damage to their homes during Israeli military operations in 2014.

3. Israeli occupying forces continued to carry out frequent military raids and incursions in the West Bank, resulting in the killing and injuring of Palestinians; hundreds more, including children and young people, were arrested or detained. During the reporting period, more than 6,000 Palestinians remained in Israeli prisons and detention centres. Hundreds went on hunger strike to protest their administrative detention and ill-treatment.

4. Israel continued to expand its illegal settlements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Settlement construction was accompanied by official plans to build thousands of new settlement units, further fragmenting Palestinian land and disconnecting communities, and attempts to retroactively "legalize" settlement outposts. Hundreds of Palestinian families were forcibly displaced as a result of the increase in evictions and house demolitions. In occupied East Jerusalem, the increased number of incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and acts of incitement and provocation by extremist Israelis significantly increased the risk of ethno-religious strife, which could become part of larger conflicts throughout the region.

5. Twelve years after the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice was rendered, the construction of the wall by Israel continued, severely impairing the movement and access of the Palestinian population, including to their farmlands and to such essential services as education and health care, further isolating East Jerusalem and harming the socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people.

6. Against the backdrop of stalled Palestinian-Israeli peace talks since April 2014 and growing tensions, France launched a new initiative in October 2015 aimed at mobilizing international support for Palestinian-Israeli peace and providing a

framework for a credible political process. To that end, a ministerial meeting was convened on 3 June 2016 in Paris. On 1 July, the Middle East Quartet issued a long-awaited report with recommendations to address the prevailing situation and persistent obstacles on the path to peace and thus advance conditions conducive for negotiations aimed at the achievement of the two-State solution as a lasting settlement of the conflict. In May, Egypt appealed to Israel and the State of Palestine to achieve a peace agreement. In August, the Russian Federation offered to host direct talks between Israel and the State of Palestine.

7. Regional and other partners facilitated new reconciliation talks between Fatah and Hamas; the process is ongoing, however, and Palestinian unity has not yet been reached.

8. Municipal elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip scheduled for 8 October, in which Hamas had pledged to participate, were suspended on 8 September by a Palestinian high court ruling following a dispute over electoral lists in Gaza and the inability of Palestinians in East Jerusalem to participate.

9. Palestinian state- and institution-building efforts continued notwithstanding restrictions imposed by Israel on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which continued to obstruct the free movement of persons and goods and viable political and economic activity and undermine sustained development and growth. The accession by the State of Palestine to a series of international conventions and instruments, their implementation and the reporting requirements have provided the State of Palestine the opportunity to build capacity, especially regarding human rights standards and good governance, to bring it to par with other signatory countries. Similarly, the commitment by the State of Palestine to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under occupation has posed challenges to national institutions, along with opportunities to develop capacity.

10. The activities of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, its Bureau and Working Group continued to draw the attention of the international community to issues requiring urgent action, such as the dire living conditions and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, international efforts to revitalize negotiations, the situation in occupied East Jerusalem and the challenges posed by the occupation with respect to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, with the objective of mobilizing wide support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

11. The Committee continued to reaffirm and promote the United Nations position that a just and permanent settlement of the question of Palestine could be reached only by ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, achieving the full independence of the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and reaching a just and agreed solution to the issue of Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

12. With the approach of the fiftieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation, the General Assembly, at its seventy-first session, is expected to declare 2017 as the "International Year to End the Israeli Occupation", with activities and efforts to be organized to that end.

Chapter II
Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine

Political developments

13. The reporting period saw new initiatives to revitalize the peace process. Recognizing the need to go beyond the bilateral mediation model that has proved ineffective for more than 20 years, on 15 October, France announced an initiative to launch a multilateral political process to move towards a just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and salvage the two-State solution.

14. After a series of consultations with the parties and regional and international partners, on 3 June 2016, a ministerial meeting for the French peace initiative was held in Paris, with the participation of the Middle East Quartet, the European Union, the League of Arab States (LAS) and some 25 countries, including Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The aim of the initiative was to provide a concrete political vision, with the establishment of an international support group to work on three key aspects: economic incentives and compensation measures; security arrangements; and confidence-building measures and institution-building in support of the Palestinian reconciliation process. The plan to convene an international conference later in 2016 would give a new impetus to diplomatic efforts to advance the prospects for peace. Subsequently, many participants, including the LAS member countries, expressed their support for the French initiative but voiced the need for a timeline for ending the conflict, along with clear terms of reference for the negotiations and the principle of a return to the pre-1967 borders.

15. Throughout the reporting period, the Middle East Quartet also remained engaged with the parties; its envoys visited Israel and the State of Palestine to encourage steps to promote the easing of tensions and a rebuilding of trust. In September 2015, the Middle East Quartet held its customary meeting in the margins of the General Assembly, for the first time in an expanded format including key regional, international and European partners. On 1 July 2016, the Quartet issued a report focusing on three major threats to the achievement of the two-State solution: incitement of violence and terrorism; settlement expansion in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; and the continued lack of Palestinian reconciliation and control over Gaza by the Palestinian Government of national consensus. The recommendations contained in the report were criticized by the State of Palestine, its Arab partners and others for the artificial symmetry attributed to the parties and for the failure to propose innovative ways forward or a clear path towards reaching a lasting peace, the end of the occupation and the long overdue independence of the Palestinian State.

16. High-level officials from Egypt visited the State of Palestine and Israel in June and July 2016 to meet with the Palestinian President and the Israeli Prime Minister, respectively. In August, the Russian Federation offered to host direct talks between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Moscow, which was in principle welcomed by both sides. Meeting on 23 September in New York, Quartet principals and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Egypt and France agreed to coordinate all peace efforts.

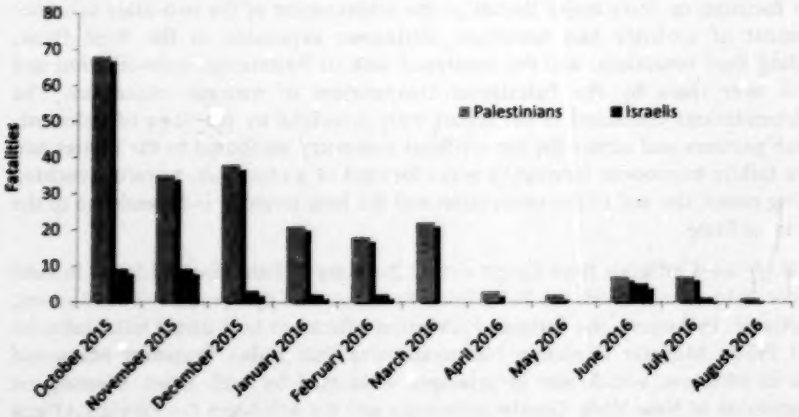
17. On 24 March, the Human Rights Council adopted four resolutions relating to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In the three customary resolutions, adopted without a vote, the Council reaffirmed the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (resolution 31/33); demanded that Israel cease all practices and actions that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people or the character, status and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (resolution 31/34); and requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate the implications of settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people (resolution 31/35). Of particular significance was a new resolution (resolution 31/36) on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, in which the Council called upon Israel to immediately cease and reverse all settlement activities and called upon the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to produce a database of all actors conducting business in areas under Israeli military occupation, bearing in mind the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

18. On 24 March, the Human Rights Council appointed Stanley Michael Lynk (Canada) as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, replacing Makarim Wibisono (Indonesia), who had resigned in January over the failure by Israel to cooperate with his mandate.

Security

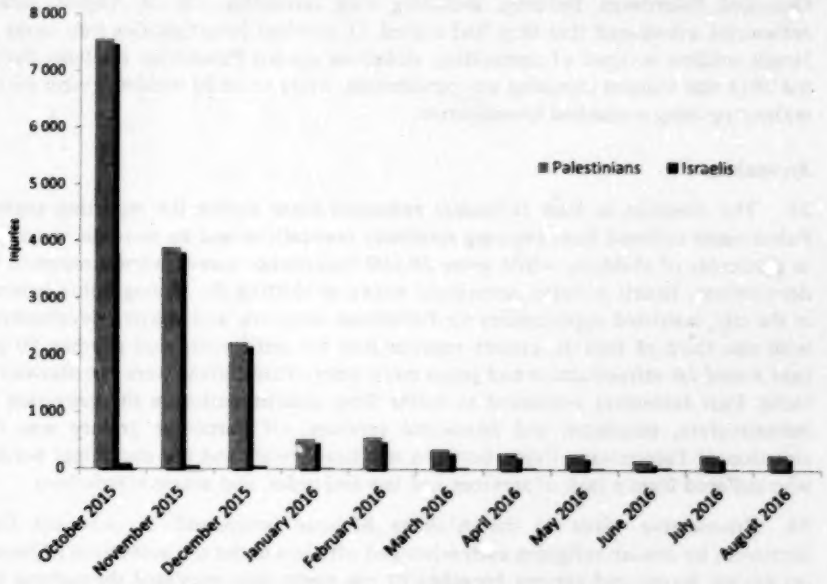
19. The reporting period was marked by continuing tensions, military incursions and raids by the Israeli occupying forces and clashes with Palestinian youth and protesters in many parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, on an almost daily basis. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, as at 31 August, 388 Palestinians had been killed and 15,542 injured during the reporting period (see figs. 1 and 2 below). Attacks, which took the lives of Israeli civilians, also occurred during the reporting period.

Figure 1
Number of Israelis and Palestinians killed during the reporting period



Source: http://www.ochaopt.org/.

Figure 2
Number of Israelis and Palestinians injured during the reporting period



Source: http://www.ochaopt.org/.

20. The aggravation of tensions in October and November 2015, especially at the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, was cause for concern and risked bringing about further destabilization. In response to the escalation, on 16 October, at the request of Jordan, the Security Council held an urgent meeting to address the unlawful and arbitrary practices of Israel against the Palestinian people, including incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, in an attempt to change the status quo in the city and at Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

21. Among the most egregious cases of extrajudicial killings, on 24 March 2016, an unarmed Palestinian man, who had been shot at a military checkpoint in Hebron and was lying on the ground without any medical attention, was shot in the head and killed by an Israeli soldier. On 27 April, a 23-year-old five-month pregnant woman and her 16-year-old brother were killed by Israeli soldiers at the Qalandiya checkpoint between Jerusalem and Ramallah. The limited scope of Israeli investigations of Israeli occupying forces who have committed extrajudicial killings, which to date have led to only one conviction, is commonly cited as an example of the refusal by Israel to abide by international law and standards and a source of further impunity.

22. In Gaza, the lives of the 1.9 million Palestinians living in the Strip continue to be disrupted by the illegal blockade imposed by Israel, which is now entering its tenth year. Two years after the 2014 conflict, the rate of investigations opened by Israel into the serious allegations contained in the report of the independent commission of

inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1 (A/HRC/29/52) remains low. In January 2015, the International Criminal Court launched a preliminary investigation with respect to alleged crimes committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. On 24 August, Israeli authorities announced that they had closed 13 criminal investigations into cases of Israeli soldiers accused of committing violations against Palestinian civilians during the 2014 war without imposing any punishment, while some 80 incidents were closed without opening a criminal investigation.

Jerusalem

23. The situation in East Jerusalem remained tense during the reporting period. Palestinians suffered from ongoing residency revocations and an increase in arrests, in particular of children, while some 20,000 Palestinian homes were threatened by demolitions. Israeli policies, seemingly aimed at shifting the demographic balance in the city, restricted opportunities for Palestinian economic and housing development, with one third of East Jerusalem expropriated for settlements and another 50 per cent zoned for infrastructure and green areas where Palestinians were not allowed to build. East Jerusalem continued to suffer from discrimination in the provision of infrastructure, education and municipal services. Of particular gravity was the situation of Palestinians living between the Israeli wall and the municipal border, who suffered from a lack of services and law and order, and access restrictions.

24. Provocative visits to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem by Jewish religious extremists and officials under the protection of Israeli occupying forces and serious breaches of the status quo escalated throughout the reporting period, repeatedly leading to violent confrontations with Palestinian worshippers.

25. In October 2015, in clashes between Palestinians and Israeli occupying forces, 68 Palestinians were killed and 1,118 injured. Nine Israelis were killed by Palestinians. In that month alone, a total of 22 violent incidents at religious sites were reported, including Israeli occupying forces entering the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and firing rubber-coated steel bullets and stun and tear-gas grenades at worshippers. The following month saw 25 violent incidents at religious sites, concomitantly with clashes between Palestinian civilians and Israeli settlers and increased Israeli military raids on Palestinian cities, towns, villages and refugee camps in the West Bank.

26. Subsequently, the Government of Israel decided to substantially increase its military forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to impose further restrictions on access to the Old City of Jerusalem for non-resident Palestinians. The incursions into the holy sites were perceived by the Palestinians as an attempt to change the status quo of the sites, as established under the existing agreements between Israel and Jordan, in its capacity as custodian of the holy sites, despite a public statement by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the status quo would be maintained.

Settlements

27. Israel continued its policy of illegal settlement-building in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, in violation of international law (for example, the Fourth Geneva Convention) and Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and despite repeated international calls for a cessation of all settlement activities.

28. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, an estimated 150,000 Palestinians reside in Area C of the West Bank, over which Israel retains complete control and which contains the most significant land reserves available for Palestinian development, as well as the bulk of Palestinian agricultural and grazing land. While the number of Palestinian residents in Area C has steadily diminished owing to repressive Israeli policies in the area, 300,000 Israeli settlers are now living in approximately 135 Israeli settlements and 100 settlement outposts in Area C.

29. Israel has increased its control over Palestinian territory by declaring as "state land" tracts of Palestinian land that have not been registered as "private". The policy is based on an interpretation of the Ottoman land code, which Israel adopted into its own legislation. For example, on 10 March, 580 acres south of Jericho were declared "state land". In August, after the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the illegal Israeli settlement outpost of Amona was to be dismantled, Israel announced plans to declare nearby Palestinian land as "state land" in order to relocate the settlers.

30. According to the General Bureau of Statistics of Israel, during the fourth quarter of 2015 and the first half of 2016, the construction of 817 settlement structures was begun, 999 structures were completed and 2,806 were still under construction as at 1 July.

31. Since the publication of the report of the Middle East Quartet on 1 July, Israel has persisted with such illegal actions and has advanced plans for more than 1,000 settlement units in occupied East Jerusalem and other settlements in the West Bank, including 770 housing units in the settlement of Gilo, between Bethlehem and East Jerusalem, and 200 settlement units in the Modi'in Illit settlement, west of Ramallah. In and around Hebron, Israel is planning to build new units in the settlement of Kiryat Arba and is examining plans for new settlement units for more than 100 Israelis on a portion of a military compound in the city.

32. Israel is also undertaking a new land survey to identify potential "state land" in the sensitive E2 area. This step could enable the establishment of a new settlement on the outskirts of Bethlehem, further restricting that city's development, isolating it and contributing to the dismemberment of the West Bank.

33. Israel continued its attempts to retroactively "legalize" previously established settlement outposts and construction in existing settlements. In July, Israeli authorities advanced plans to legalize the outposts of Horesh Yaron and Rechelim and, on 31 August, they issued 179 building permits retroactively, legalizing under Israeli law housing units that had been erected in the settlement of Ofarim. These decisions drew strong condemnation from the international community, including the United States of America and the European Union.

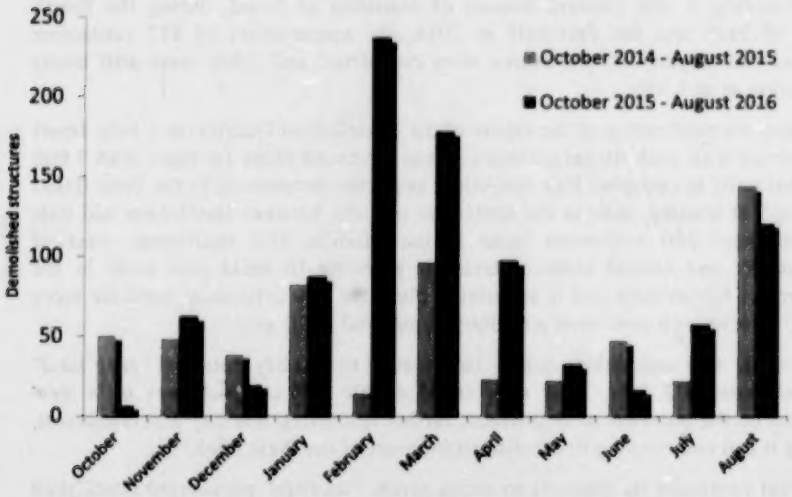
34. Settler violence and terror against Palestinians and their property continued during the reporting period. The number of damaged, stolen or uprooted trees was

the highest since 2006. On 20 July, members of the Dawabsha family were victims of an arson attack similar to the one suffered by their relatives in July 2015, when Israeli settlers set their home on fire. Data collected by the Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din indicate that 85 per cent of Israeli investigations into ideologically motivated crimes against Palestinians are closed owing to police investigative failures and that there is a mere 1.9 per cent chance that a complaint filed by a Palestinian with the Israel authorities will result in the conviction of the perpetrator/s.

Demolitions and displacement

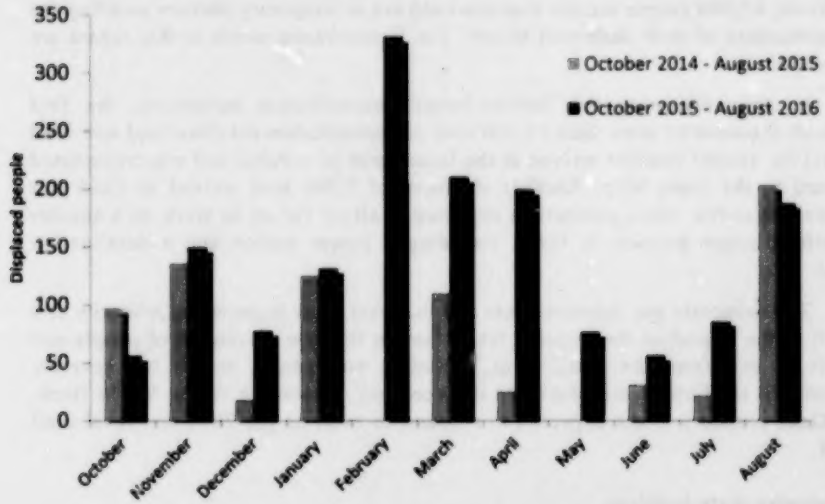
35. A significant trend during the reporting period was the surge in demolitions by Israel, the occupying Power, of Palestinian homes and structures built without Israeli-issued permits, which are nearly impossible to obtain. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to date in 2016, Israeli occupying forces in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have demolished 726 structures, displacing 1,020 Palestinians. The figures for the period from 1 January to 31 August surpass those of the entire year of 2015, when there were 533 demolitions and 688 people displaced (see figs. 3 and 4).

Figure 3
Comparison of the number of demolitions of Palestinian structures in the current and previous reporting periods



Source: http://www.ochaopt.org/.

Figure 4
Comparison of the number of Palestinians displaced by demolitions in the current and previous reporting periods



Source: http://www.ochaopt.org/.

36. Israeli authorities demolished multiple residences and structures, including European Union-funded Palestinian homes, in Sebastia, Umm al-Kheir, Umm al-Hiran and the Jericho villages of al-Jiftlik and Fasayil. The stated intention to completely destroy the villages of Susiya and Umm al-Hiran near Hebron has provoked outrage on the part of the international community, with the United States and the European Union as well as other States and regional organizations strongly condemning the plan.

37. Bedouin communities in the occupied West Bank, such as the community of Abu Nawar southwest of the Israeli settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, were forcibly transferred owing to plans by Israeli authorities to build thousands of homes for Jewish-only settlements in the E1 corridor, in Area C east of Jerusalem. Among the 85 recently destroyed or confiscated structures, 24 had been provided by donors as emergency relief, while Israel contends that they had been built without official permits.

Reconstruction of the Gaza Strip

38. On 12 October 2014, at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, some 50 donor countries pledged $5.4 billion ($2.5 billion in new commitments) in relief funds for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, of which $3.5 billion was pledged for Gaza. At the time of the issuance of the present report, only 40 per cent of total pledges had been disbursed.

39. The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, namely, the temporary agreement between Israel, the State of Palestine and the United Nations to enable construction

and reconstruction work on the large scale required in the Gaza Strip, started slowly but made some headway in 2016. By August 2016, half of the homes that had suffered partial damage and a third of the destroyed homes had been rebuilt. All of the 78 hospitals and the 252 schools that had been damaged have been repaired. However, 65,000 people remain displaced and are in temporary shelters awaiting the reconstruction of their destroyed homes. The humanitarian needs in this regard are immense.

40. In July, following the Turkish-Israeli reconciliation agreement, the first Turkish shipment of more than 11,000 tons of humanitarian aid (food and non-food items) for 10,000 families arrived at the Israeli port of Ashdod and was transported onward to the Gaza Strip. Another shipment of 2,200 tons arrived in Gaza just before Eid al-Fitr. The agreement is expected to allow Turkey to work on a number of infrastructure projects in Gaza, including a power station and a desalination plant.

41. The economic gap between Gaza and the West Bank is growing, primarily as a result of the impact of the ongoing restriction on the free movement of people and goods to and from the Gaza Strip, including on exports, which has severely diminished livelihoods and damaged the economy. According to the World Bank, the Gaza economy is not expected to rebound to even its pre-2014 war level until 2018.

Palestinian state-building

Local elections

42. During the reporting period, Palestinian state-building efforts continued, supported by the international community. In a welcome development, on 21 June, the Government of the State of Palestine announced that on 8 October, local council elections would be held throughout the occupied West Bank, Gaza and the districts of East Jerusalem governorate that had not been unilaterally annexed by Israel. Subsequently, Hamas expressed its willingness to participate in the elections and to facilitate the process in the Gaza Strip. Five Palestinian left-wing movements entered the elections on a unified list, while Palestinian Islamic Jihad announced that it would not participate.

43. In accordance with the election calendar, voter registration was conducted from 23 to 27 July, resulting in some 74,000 new applications and a total of 2,051,598 registered voters. Almost half of the new voters registered online, while the rest registered in the 416 municipalities. On 29 August, the Central Elections Commission-Palestine published a total of 874 electoral lists and candidates, including 787 lists in the West Bank and 87 lists in Gaza. It reported that its registration officers did not face security threats or access restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza. However, on 25 August, political factions and institutions in Nablus decided to postpone the elections in the wake of violent confrontations between Palestinian security forces and local armed groups.

44. Candidate nominations took place from 16 to 25 August and the final register of electoral lists was expected to be published on 24 September. Political campaigning was scheduled for 24 September to 6 October. On 8 September, however, the Palestinian Supreme Court in Ramallah suspended the elections,

following a complaint about the disqualification of a number of Fatah lists by a Gaza court and owing to the inability to hold a vote in occupied East Jerusalem as a result of Israeli obstruction. On 4 October, one day after the Palestinian Supreme Court ruling to exclude the Gaza Strip from the elections, the Government of the State of Palestine decided to postpone the vote for four months.

Reconciliation

45. During the reporting period, Fatah and Hamas failed to significantly advance their reconciliation process. In March 2016, and again in June, their representatives met in Doha to continue discussions, without any progress. The South African non-governmental organization In Transition Initiative organized two intra-Palestinian dialogues with senior leaders from Fatah and Hamas and Palestinians from the whole political spectrum, as well as civil society, with a view to forging a common political vision for the future. In addition, Egypt has expressed its readiness to continue mediating the reconciliation process.

46. In August, Israeli Parliament members from the joint Arab list met with the Palestinian leadership to discuss the inter-Palestinian reconciliation efforts, in an attempt to play a bridging role not only between Israelis and Palestinians, but also between Fatah, Hamas and other Palestinian factions.

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

47. At the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, held from 25 to 27 September 2015 in New York, the Government of the State of Palestine committed to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Subsequently, the Government integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into its agenda through the creation of a national planning matrix and established a national coordinating committee for the Sustainable Development Goals in the State of Palestine under the leadership of Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah.

48. The United Nations Environment Programme worked on enhancing the capacity of the State of Palestine for climate change adaptation and mitigation, recognizing the critical impact that climate change might have on water availability, land degradation and agriculture. This included a capacity assessment of six national institutions and the preparation of a capacity development action plan. The State of Palestine acceded to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and became a full member on 17 March.

Socioeconomic issues

49. At its meeting in April 2016, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee of the International Assistance to Palestinians pointed to the sharp decline in donor aid to the Palestinian Authority, which, combined with the political impasse, was impairing the perspective of preserving the two-State solution. However, despite the need for more vigorous and predictable donor support, no amount of aid was considered sufficient to place the economy on the path of sustainable development under conditions of frequent military strikes and destruction of infrastructure, isolation from global markets, fragmentation of domestic markets and confiscation of and denial of access to national natural resources.

50. The substantial challenges faced by Palestinians and young people in particular result from their social, economic and political marginalization under occupation. Two out of five Palestinian youths were unemployed during the first quarter of 2016, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. The highest unemployment rate was among young people between 20 and 24 years old, reaching 43 per cent, compared with 39 per cent for young people aged 25 to 29. Unemployment among young graduates reached 51 per cent. In Gaza, the youth unemployment rate exceeds 60 per cent.

51. The limitations imposed by the Israeli occupation on a dignified existence include vital access to clean, safe drinking water. In June, during Ramadan, the Israeli company Mekorot, the main supplier of water to the West Bank, interrupted its provision in Jenin, Nablus and Salfit districts for several days, arguing that repairs needed to be done. Palestinians were left without access to safe drinking water while illegal Israeli settlements enjoyed an uninterrupted supply.

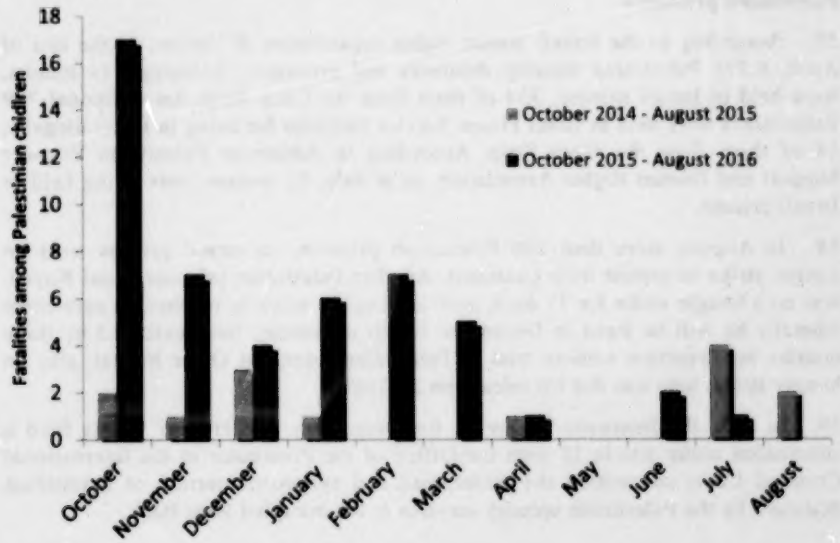
52. In July, in retaliation against attacks targeting Israeli civilians in the West Bank, Israel froze the transfer, to the Government of the State of Palestine, of tax revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian people under the Paris Protocol to the Oslo Accords. The freeze deepened the Palestinian financial crisis and affected the livelihoods of thousands of Palestinians. In a report issued on 28 August, the World Bank estimated that the State of Palestine was losing $285 million in annual revenues under the current economic arrangements with Israel.

53. In a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on the economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people (A/71/174), prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/12, it was suggested that without the occupation, the Palestinian economy could be twice its current size.

54. In its resolution 2016/4 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, and in an effort to tackle issues surrounding the advancement of women and social development, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations, in addition to the high rates of poverty and unemployment, which affect women disproportionally.

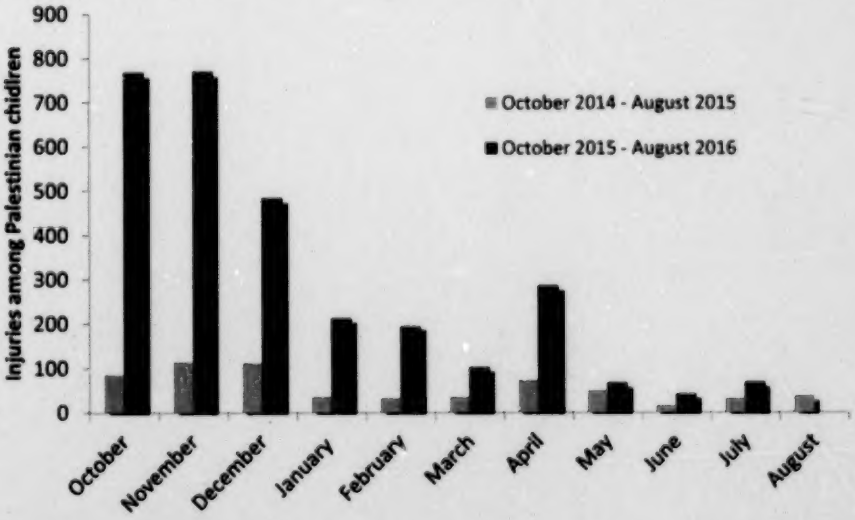
55. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the reporting period saw a significant increase in the number of Palestinian children killed and injured by Israeli occupying forces (see figs. 5 and 6 below). The report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict issued in April 2016 (A/70/836-S/2016/360) also highlights the increasing number of Palestinian children arrested and detained by Israeli occupying forces and prosecuted by juvenile military courts in the West Bank. According to the Israel Prison Service, the monthly average number of children in Israeli custody in 2015 increased by 15 per cent compared with 2014.

Figure 5
Comparison of the number of Palestinian children killed in the current and previous reporting periods



Source: http://www.ochaopt.org/.

Figure 6
Comparison of the number of Palestinian children injured in the current and previous reporting periods



Source: http://www.ochaopt.org/.

56. On 3 August, the Israeli Parliament approved the Youth Bill, allowing Israeli authorities to imprison Palestinian children as young as 12 years if convicted of "terrorism" against Israeli civilians or military personnel.

Palestinian prisoners

57. According to the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, at the end of April, 6,295 Palestinian security detainees and prisoners, including 414 minors, were held in Israeli prisons, 334 of them from the Gaza Strip. An additional 749 Palestinians were held in Israel Prison Service facilities for being in Israel illegally, 14 of them from the Gaza Strip. According to Addameer Palestinian Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, as at July, 62 women were being held in Israeli prisons.

58. In August, more than 200 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons went on hunger strike to protest their treatment. Another Palestinian prisoner, Bilal Kayed, was on a hunger strike for 71 days, until 25 August, when he reached an agreement whereby he will be freed in December. Israeli authorities have extended by three months the detention without trial of Palestinian journalist Omar Nazzal, also on hunger strike, who was due for release on 22 August.

59. In July, the International Forum for Democracy and Human Rights filed a submission under article 15 with the Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court concerning the widespread and systematic torture of Palestinian detainees by the Palestinian security services in the occupied West Bank.

Chapter III
Mandate of the Committee

60. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly by resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, with the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights, as recognized by the Assembly in its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974. Further information about the Committee is available on the website maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat at https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/udc.htm.

61. On 24 November 2015, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Committee (resolution 70/12), requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division for Palestinian Rights with the necessary resources to carry out its programme of work (resolution 70/13) and requested the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat (resolution 70/14). The Assembly also adopted resolution 70/15, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

Chapter IV
Organization of work

A. Membership and officers

62. The Committee is composed of the following Member States: Afghanistan, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cuba, Cyprus, Ecuador, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

63. The observers at the Committee meetings are: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam and Yemen, as well as the State of Palestine, the African Union, LAS and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

64. The day-to-day tasks of the Committee are undertaken by its Bureau. At its 375th meeting, on 27 January 2016, the Committee elected Fodé Seck (Senegal) as Chair, Mahmoud Saikal (Afghanistan), Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba), Desra Percaya (Indonesia), Wilfried Emvula (Namibia) and María Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) as Vice-Chairs and Christopher Grima (Malta) as Rapporteur. At its 377th meeting, on 4 August, the Committee elected Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia) as a new Vice-Chair, to replace Desra Percaya, and Carmelo Inguanez as the new Rapporteur, to replace Christopher Grima, who had been assigned by their Governments to another post.

65. The current composition of the Security Council includes, as elected members, five members and observers of the Committee, namely, Egypt, Malaysia, Senegal, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

66. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all States Members of the United Nations and observers wishing to participate in the work of the Committee were welcome to do so. In accordance with established practice, the State of Palestine participated in the work of the Committee as an observer, attended all of its meetings, gave briefings and put forward observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee and its Bureau.

Chapter V
Action taken by the Committee

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/12

1. Action taken in the Security Council

67. During the open debates at the Security Council held on 22 October 2015 and 26 January, 18 April and 12 July 2016, the Committee delivered statements highlighting the situation and calling upon the Council to take appropriate actions (see S/PV.7540; S/PV.7540, Resumption 1; S/PV.7610; S/PV.7673; S/PV.7736).

2. Action taken by the Bureau of the Committee

68. The members of the Bureau represented the Committee at all the international conferences organized in accordance with the programme of work. In the margins of those events, the Committee delegation met with senior officials from the respective host countries. In particular, the Committee delegation met with the Indonesian Minister for Foreign Affairs and parliamentarians. In Amman, it held consultations with high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Jordan. In Dakar, the Committee delegation held consultations with the Foreign Relations Committee of the National Assembly of Senegal and the Minister of Justice and President of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute. In Stockholm, it met with high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden. In Geneva, the Committee delegation held consultations with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

69. On 12 November 2015, the Bureau held its first annual retreat to review the work of the Committee. Issues discussed included the need for periodic reviews of the efficacy of the programmes of work of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights, the programme of work of the Committee for 2016, the work of the Bureau during the tenure of Senegal in the Security Council (2016-2017), capacity-building for the staff of the Government of the State of Palestine and engagement with civil society organizations.

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 70/12 and 70/13

1. Committee meetings at Headquarters

70. During the reporting period, the Committee held six periodic meetings at United Nations Headquarters in New York, in addition to the informal meetings of its Bureau and the meetings of its Working Group. At its 372nd meeting, on 5 October 2015, the Committee adopted its annual report. At its 373rd meeting, on 10 November, the Committee approved for submission to the General Assembly four draft resolutions, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of

the Secretariat" and "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". Also at that meeting, UNCTAD briefed the Committee on the economic and social costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people. At its 375th meeting, on 27 January 2016, attended by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Committee re-elected its Chair, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteur and adopted its annual programme of work. At its 376th meeting, on 7 April, the Committee focused on the reports on the international conferences held to date and adopted the programme for upcoming international conferences. At its 377th meeting, on 4 August, the Committee elected its Vice-Chair and Rapporteur. It also heard reports on international conferences and accredited two civil society organizations.

71. In addition to its periodic meetings, during the reporting period, the Committee organized a public event at United Nations Headquarters, namely, a briefing by Mahmoud Elkhafif, Coordinator of the UNCTAD Assistance to the Palestinian People Unit, and Atif Kubursi, Consultant to UNCTAD, which was held on 10 November.

2. Programme of international meetings and conferences

72. During the reporting period, the following international events were held under the auspices of the Committee:

(a) International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, under the theme "Addressing the present and shaping the future of Jerusalem", jointly organized with OIC, Jakarta, 14 and 15 December 2015;

(b) United Nations Civil Society Forum on the Question of Palestine, under the theme "Civil society action in support of justice in Palestine and ending the occupation", Jakarta, 16 December. At the conference, attended by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and the State of Palestine, participants provided up-to-date information on the current situation in Jerusalem to inform policy and decision makers, civil society and the general public and considered ways to enhance international efforts for a halt to unilateral Israeli actions as well as possible ways forward for Jerusalem. Speakers considered the efforts by the United Nations to find a solution to the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the situation on the ground and regional and local civil society initiatives in support of Palestinian rights;

(c) United Nations Round Table on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine, under the theme "Instruments and institutions of international treaty law — theory and practice", Amman, 15 to 17 March 2016. The round table, held in closed-door format, was aimed at developing the capacity and expertise of staff of the Government of the State of Palestine in the field of international treaty law, including implementation and reporting, in view of its accession in recent years to a series of international treaties and conventions. Participants discussed opportunities and strategies for the State of Palestine to utilize international legal instruments, explored relevant best practices and introduced attendees to the audiovisual international law library of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat;

(d) International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, under the theme "Jerusalem at the heart of the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", jointly organized with OIC, Dakar, 3 and 4 May. The conference, attended by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Senegal and the State of Palestine, provided up-to-

date information on the current situation in East Jerusalem under occupation; identified opportunities to intensify international support for resilience, protection and development in the city; explored possible scenarios for a just and lasting settlement of the question of Jerusalem; and provided a venue for an open exchange among experts, civil society activists and academics;

(e) United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, under the theme "Agenda 2030: Paving the way towards a peaceful, independent and sustainable State of Palestine", Stockholm, 19 and 20 May. Participants reviewed the challenges and constraints of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for the State of Palestine under the Israeli occupation. They also looked at ways of building: (i) resilient and sustainable economic growth while addressing humanitarian needs; (ii) long-term investment in young people and women as a key to building a peaceful and inclusive society; and (iii) international solidarity and partnerships for development;

(f) United Nations International Conference in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, under the theme "Peace is possible — frameworks for a way forward", Geneva, 29 and 30 June. The conference provided experienced peace negotiators, and representatives of Member States, United Nations entities and civil society, a venue to: (i) discuss lessons learned from past stages of the peace process and initiatives such as the Arab Peace Initiative; (ii) assess recent initiatives such as the French peace initiative; and (iii) discuss new proposals for a lasting solution to the conflict. Questions were raised as to whether the long-standing formula of bilateral peace negotiations had reached its limits. Reference was made to other multilateral negotiations as examples to be followed, with the international community acting together to support Israeli-Palestinian peace.

73. The public events mentioned above were attended by representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations system entities, as well as parliamentarians and representatives of civil society and the media. Detailed information about the meetings is being issued in the form of publications of the Division for Palestinian Rights and is available on the "Question of Palestine" website maintained by the Division.

3. Cooperation with intergovernmental and regional organizations

74. Throughout the year, the Committee continued its cooperation with intergovernmental organizations. The Committee is appreciative of the active participation of their representatives in the various international events held under its auspices and the co-sponsorship provided by OIC in the organization of the two International Conferences on the Question of Jerusalem, held in Jakarta, which the Secretary General of OIC attended, and in Dakar, respectively. The Committee is also grateful for the financial support provided by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund for International Development for the annual training programme for Palestinian staff organized by the Division in October 2015 to familiarize them with various aspects of the multilateral work of the Secretariat and other United Nations organs and bodies. The African Union, LAS and OIC, as observers to the Committee, regularly attend the meetings of the Committee and its Working Group and participate in their work.

4. Cooperation with civil society

Civil society organizations

75. The Committee continued its cooperation with civil society organizations worldwide, through its Working Group and other outreach activities carried out by the Division for Palestinian Rights. During the reporting period, two civil society organizations were accredited to the Committee. Civil society representatives participated in all public international meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee. On 16 December 2015, a civil society forum was organized by the Committee in Jakarta, in conjunction with the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem.

76. The Working Group of the Committee, chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta, met periodically and hosted various events at Headquarters, including:

(a) Briefing by representatives of the human rights organization Adalah (the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel) on the recent situation in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, 9 November 2015;

(b) Panel discussion on the theme "Women's role in the search for Israeli-Palestinian peace" in the margins of the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on 14 March 2016. Hiba Husseini, Legal adviser for the peace negotiations and founding member of the Al-Mustaqbal Foundation, and Lihi Joffee, Board member of the Coalition of Women for Peace, spoke about their efforts for peace in a public discussion moderated by Sarah Taylor, Women, Peace and Security Advocate at Human Rights Watch;

(c) Screening of the film "Giraffada", organized in cooperation with the Department of Public Information, 7 April;

(d) Briefing by Sahar Francis, Director of Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, and Khaled Quzmar, General Director of Defense for Children International-Palestine, moderated by Sarah Leah Whitson, Executive Director of the Middle East and North Africa Division of Human Rights Watch, on the situation of detained children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 27 April.

77. The Division for Palestinian Rights maintains a civil society page (https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/udc.htm) on the "Question of Palestine" website and the UN Platform for Palestine site (www.unpfp.org) as a tool for outreach to civil society organizations and to foster civil society networking and cooperation. During the reporting period, it continued to publish the periodic online bulletin *NGO Action News*, reaching out to more than 900 civil society organizations around the world, in order to catalogue and publicize civil society initiatives, and organized brown-bag sessions.

Parliaments, interparliamentary organizations and local governments

78. The Committee continued to attach great importance to developing its liaison with national and regional parliaments and their organizations. Representatives of parliaments and interparliamentary organizations participated in international events organized by the Committee during the reporting period. Among others, members of

the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the Israeli Knesset, the Swedish Riksdag and the National Assembly of Senegal participated in the international meetings held under the auspices of the Committee. The Committee delegation held meetings with parliamentarians at the Parliament of Indonesia and the National Assembly of Senegal on the sidelines of the conferences in Jakarta and Dakar, respectively.

5. Research, monitoring and publications

79. The Division for Palestinian Rights carried out research and monitoring activities and responded to requests for information and briefings on the question of Palestine. Under the guidance of the Committee, the Division prepared the following publications for dissemination:

(a) Monthly bulletin on action taken by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine;

(b) Monthly chronology of events relating to the question of Palestine based on media reports and other sources;

(c) Reports of international meetings and conferences organized under the auspices of the Committee;

(d) Special bulletin and information notes on the observance of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(e) Periodic reviews of developments related to the Middle East peace process;

(f) Annual compilation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine.

6. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

80. The Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with relevant technical and library services of the United Nations Secretariat, continued to administer, maintain, expand and upgrade the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine and the "Question of Palestine" website (https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/udc.htm). The Division maintained its Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages to disseminate information about the work on the question of Palestine by the Committee and the United Nations as a whole. As part of its efforts to improve on access to its publications and document collection, the Division for Palestinian Rights is in the process of redesigning the website on the "Question of Palestine" and aligning it with current United Nations organizational standards.

7. Capacity-building programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine

81. As part of its efforts to develop the annual capacity-building programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine, as mandated by General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 70/13, and in consultation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations in New York, the Division for Palestinian Rights organized and administered a number of capacity-

building initiatives. In October 2015, the Division organized the annual training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine. These training activities allow the Palestinian staff to familiarize themselves with various aspects of the multilateral work of the Secretariat and other United Nations organs and bodies, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The training is financially supported by the OPEC Fund for International Development. In March 2016, 25 Palestinians received training at the United Nations Round Table on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine, held under the theme "Instruments and institutions of international treaty law — theory and practice", which took place in Amman. In May, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Division arranged for two Palestinian staff members to travel to Geneva and observe a session of the Committee against Torture.

8. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

82. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed on 23 November 2015 at Headquarters in New York, on 24 November at the United Nations Office at Vienna and on 30 November at the United Nations Office at Geneva. At Headquarters, the Committee held a special meeting with the participation of the Deputy Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council and organized a photo exhibit entitled "Palestinian Children: Overcoming Tragedies with Hope, Dreams, Resilience and Dignity". The Committee noted with appreciation that International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People had also been observed by United Nations Information Centres and other bodies in many cities throughout the world. Details on the observance can be found on the website (unispal.un.org) maintained by the Division.

Chapter VI

Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/14 and by other United Nations entities

83. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information continued to implement its special information programme on the question of Palestine in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/14.

84. The Department organized the annual five-week training programme for 10 Palestinian journalists, held from November to December in New York and Washington, D.C., and its annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, held in Pretoria from 31 August to 2 September.

85. The Department continued to regularly cover the broad range of issues and developments related to the question of Palestine and the Middle East peace process across its multilingual news platforms. Live coverage was provided and materials made available on demand through United Nations Television, on the Department website and on social media.

86. The Arabic Website Unit of the Department of Public Information provided support for campaigns and online appeals run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, focusing on the humanitarian situation affecting the Palestinian people and the Palestine refugee populations in the Middle East.

87. The Department's global network of more than 60 United Nations Information Centres organized a number of outreach activities, including exhibitions, film screenings and conferences, and translated and disseminated information materials on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

88. In addition, a number of outreach events to commemorate the 2015 International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People were organized at Headquarters and with United Nations Information Centres, including those in Cairo; Canberra; Dakar; Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania; Harare; Mexico City; and Tehran.

89. In June, the Birzeit University main library was designated the first United Nations depository library in the State of Palestine.

90. The Department is also finalizing the revised and updated edition of *The UN and the Question of Palestine*, a publication for journalists, academics, students and the public at large.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

91. UNRWA continued to provide extensive services and emergency assistance to over 5 million Palestine refugees in all its fields of operations in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. While it endeavours to serve this community in accordance with its mandate from the General Assembly, the Agency has been confronted with recurring and severe

financial crises, including in 2016, jeopardizing its ability to deliver its core programmes.

92. The Agency continues to be particularly concerned about the more than 450,000 Palestine refugees who remain in the Syrian Arab Republic, 60 per cent of whom are displaced. Overall, 95 per cent of Palestine refugees in the country are now reliant on UNRWA for assistance. The wider destabilization of the region, resulting from the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, continues to pose major socioeconomic and security concerns for Jordan and Lebanon, who host large numbers of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, in addition to existing resident populations of Palestine refugees.

United Nations Development Programme/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

93. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, continued to work on multiple levels in order to deliver on and implement the developmental needs of the State of Palestine. In supporting the Palestinian statehood agenda, the UNDP Programme focused on key areas: democratic governance and the rule of law; economic empowerment and private sector development; environment and management of natural resources; and public and social infrastructure. The programme is also critically engaged in supporting the harmonization of Gaza with the West Bank in terms of social, economic and political planning to better serve Palestinians. Similarly, in Area C, where continued barriers to the development of infrastructure are harming the status and livelihoods of vulnerable communities, the Programme has been a key agent in supporting and advocating for the basic rights of the local population to access health care, education and water.

Chapter VII
Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

94. The Committee remains convinced that a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its aspects, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, and an urgent end to the Israeli occupation and the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence, should be a top priority of the international community.

95. In its continued support for the revitalization of the peace negotiations, the Committee aligns itself with the view that the model of bilateral negotiations, which after more than two decades have not brought about the end of the Israeli occupation and the full independence of the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, should be revised. The Committee welcomes the serious steps taken by the international community towards putting forward a new, expanded multilateral framework including key regional partners, in view of reigniting the peace process on a new political horizon with the necessary international support. Serious efforts are needed between the parties to overcome their deeply entrenched mistrust, including confidence-building efforts, and demonstrate the courage and leadership that are required at this time. The Committee supports efforts from any country able to advance this process, including through bilateral negotiations.

96. As has consistently emerged during the international meetings organized by the Committee, a resolution of the conflict remains central to peace and stability throughout the volatile Middle East region and to global peace and stability. As such, the conflict clearly requires a comprehensive regional solution, conceivably with support from the reinvigorated Quartet, that includes greater engagement with key Arab States and other States concerned. The Arab Peace Initiative remains a significant contribution to such a regional settlement. The Committee supports the efforts in that regard and will continue its enhanced cooperation with LAS and OIC.

97. The Committee urges the Security Council, which has a primary responsibility for maintaining peace and security under the Charter of the United Nations, and the General Assembly to play a constructive role in reaffirming the long-standing parameters for peace based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and defining a new peace architecture for resolving the conflict. Positive consideration should be given to all proposals that endeavour to offer a way out of the current impasse. The Committee intends to contribute to a healthy and necessary discussion of these issues through its programme of work.

98. The Committee reiterates that the international community must intensify its efforts, uphold its moral and legal responsibility and demand the lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza. It notes that, two years after the devastating war of 2014, important strides in the reconstruction of Gaza have been made. However, clean water, sanitation and electricity still remain scarce and the fact that more than 65,000 people remain displaced continues to have a significant impact on an already dire humanitarian situation. The Committee calls upon international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges in order to expedite the provision of

humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process, essential for alleviating the distress of the Palestinians, including women and children.

99. Ultimately, in order to ensure respect for the rights of the Palestinian people, prevent deterioration beyond a breaking point and break the build-destroy-rebuild cycle, the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip must end and there must be a lifting of all closures within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). A Palestinian unity government is also essential to take up governance and security functions in Gaza and exercise control over the crossings.

100. The Committee reiterates that violations of humanitarian and human rights law must be investigated and that perpetrators of such violations should be brought to justice. The Committee expresses its concern at the limited implementation by Israel, the occupying Power, of the findings and recommendations contained in the report of the independent commission of inquiry on the 2014 Gaza conflict (A/HRC/29/52). The Committee welcomes the appointment of Stanley Michael Lynk as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and will strive to facilitate the implementation of his mandate.

101. The Committee underscores the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, in particular in respect of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It welcomes in that regard the adoption by the Human Rights Council of its resolution 31/36 calling for the creation of a database of all actors conducting business in areas under Israeli military occupation. The adoption of the resolution is in line with the appropriate stance of the European Union on the importation of products from settlements, encouraging its members and other organizations and States to adopt and implement policies that guarantee adherence to international conventions in regard of illegal settlements in occupied areas, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention. It welcomes further steps taken by Governments and private businesses to dissociate themselves from policies that directly or indirectly support settlements.

102. The Committee will continue, through its mandated activities, to generate heightened international awareness of the question of Palestine and international support for the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and independence. In that connection, the Committee emphasizes the useful contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat in support of its mandate and encourages it to make such adjustments to its approved programme of work as it may consider necessary in the light of developments. It notes with satisfaction: (a) the sustained level of dialogue, engagement and support on the part of the international community for the objectives of the programme, as evidenced by the number of and participation in international meetings and conferences as well as the commemorations of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; (b) the continued involvement of civil society organizations in support of the efforts of the Committee and the United Nations towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine; and (c) an increase in international awareness of the United Nations policies and activities on the question of Palestine, as evidenced by the number of visitors to the Question of

Palestine website and followers of the social media sites maintained by the Division. The Committee wishes to express its deep appreciation to its partners, in particular OIC, which contributed extrabudgetary resources, including for their active participation in conferences and events.

103. The Committee will focus its programme of international meetings and conferences in 2017, to be implemented by the Division, on amplifying international support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, stressing the role and responsibility of the United Nations in this regard and in this year marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation and the seventieth anniversary of the General Assembly resolution concerning the future government of Palestine and outlining the Plan of Partition (resolution 181 (II)). The Committee intends to work closely with other United Nations actors on the ground, such as the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and UNRWA, to synergize efforts in fields of common concern and uphold the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy (see Assembly resolution 70/12, tenth preambular para.).

104. The Committee will continue to mobilize support and assistance for Palestinian institution-building and all other efforts to support and enhance the viability of the State of Palestine, in particular in the light of its efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will reach out to and engage Governments, parliamentarians and civil society and pay particular attention to the inclusion and empowerment of women and young people and their organizations.

105. The Committee also considers that the annual capacity-building programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine, carried out by the Division, directly contributes to Palestinian efforts to establish a more efficient, accountable and transparent government. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the funding of this programme in 2015 by the OPEC Fund for International Development and strongly recommends that this important mandated activity be continued and, where possible, further expanded. Special attention should be paid to the gender balance of the programme, expanding the pool of potential participants to all offices and departments of the Government and optimizing the use of resources to allow the maximum number of participants possible. Continued voluntary contributions from Member and observer States and international organizations in line with their capacity are to be encouraged in order to place the programme on a solid financial footing.

106. The Committee highly values civil society initiatives in support of the Palestinian people. The Committee will continue to expand its efforts to engage additional civil society organizations and the public at large that support a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, including in Israel. The Committee encourages civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the United Nations, including that of the Committee, with the overall aim of promoting the achievement by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights.

107. The Committee looks forward to further developing its cooperation with parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations. Parliamentarians have a special responsibility to ensure that their Governments actively promote and support the realization of a peaceful and just settlement of the question of Palestine and uphold their obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

108. The Committee will reach out to all regional groups at the United Nations with a view to expanding its membership. It will actively work to organize more thematic debates on the question of Palestine in various United Nations forums. Recognizing the growing importance of cooperation with developing countries and regional and subregional organizations in sharing and implementing sustainable, cost-effective and replicable experiences and solutions that work, it will make a special effort to step up engagement with such countries and organizations in the context of the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation.

109. The Committee requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support and the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities, in support of the Committee's communication strategy. The Division should pay special attention to the continued development of the Question of Palestine portal, the preparation of publications and information materials on various aspects of the question of Palestine and their widest possible dissemination, including in the official languages of the United Nations, and the use of web-based social information networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. It should also continue to develop the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine document collection by reflecting current issues and events and by continuing to digitize and upload historical documents and to add user-friendly search features. The Division should continue to collaborate with the United Nations libraries at Headquarters and in Geneva in the search for historic documents.

110. The Division should continue to organize the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

111. The Committee intends to request that the General Assembly proclaim 2017 as "International Year to End the Israeli Occupation".

112. The Committee is of the view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public of the relevant issues. It requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

113. Wishing to make its contribution to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and in view of the many difficulties facing the Palestinian people and their leadership and besetting the peace process, the Committee calls upon all States to join it in this endeavour and to extend their cooperation and support to the Committee, and invites the General Assembly again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate.

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